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THE RECIPROCAL INFLUENCE OF THE  
MORAL AND PHYSICAL CONDITIONS OF  
COUNTRIES UPON EACH OTHER.

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A PRIZE ESSAY,

READ IN THE THEATRE, OXFORD,  
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BY

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M DCCC LVI.

Κῦρος δὲ ἀκούσας—οὕτω αὐτοῖσι παρήνεε, κελεύων παρασκευάζεσθαι ὥς οὐκέτι ἄρξοντας ἀλλ' ἄρξομένους· φιλέειν γὰρ ἐκ τῶν μαλακῶν χώρων μαλακοὺς γίνεσθαι. Οὐ γὰρ τὸ τῆς αὐτῆς γῆς εἶναι καρπὸν τε θωῦμαστὸν φύειν, καὶ ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς τὰ πολέμια. Ὅστε συγγνόντες Πέρσαι οἴχοντο ἀποστάντες ἐσσωθέντες τῇ γνώμῃ πρὸς Κύρου. ἄρχειν τε εἴλοντο, λυπρὴν οἰκέοντες, μᾶλλον ἢ πεδιάδα σπείροντες ἄλλοισι δουλεύειν.—*Herod.* ix. 121.

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“ We are a people yet,  
Tho' all men else their nobler dreams forget,  
Confused by brainless mobs and lawless powers ;  
Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly set  
His Saxon in blown seas and storming showers.”

*Tennyson. Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.*

*THE RECIPROCAL INFLUENCE OF THE MORAL  
AND PHYSICAL CONDITIONS OF COUNTRIES  
UPON EACH OTHER.*

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It has been said, and with apparent truth, that in most matters it is the business of one generation to ask questions, and of the next to answer them. In fact, however, the very power to question well does in itself involve a knowledge of the subject under enquiry ; and so the questions first asked are seldom those which are answered ultimately. Rather it should be said that discussion commences with little apparent result, but that the interest awakened by it leads to a more careful observation of facts, and terminates in their reduction to a scientific system ; were it not equally true that every line of enquiry is little less than infinite in its extent, leading, as it does, indirectly to other and further questions, through the many collateral subjects suggested in the course of its investigation : so true is Pope's celebrated simile, representing the student, when one branch of his enquiry is apparently mastered, as only standing, as it were, upon a partial eminence, which enables

him to perceive other and more difficult heights which yet remain to be surmounted, and these again disclosing others beyond and above themselves which had been invisible to him from his former and lower station.

A good illustration of the justice of this comparison is found in the subject of ethnology, if we compare what we know about it now, with what was known a hundred, or even thirty, years ago. In spite of the partial light which modern criticism has shed upon the early history of several races,—in spite, too, of the immense discoveries made by philologists in questions of the race and origin of nations, we know enough only to be very conscious of our ignorance, and to feel how very much remains yet unexplored. The particular questions of the effects of climate and physical conditions upon a people's character, moral and intellectual, are beset by difficulties of their own,—difficulties somewhat analogous to those experienced in mental philosophy, in the attempt to separate in any given idea the part contributed by the mind itself from that derived from the object on which the mind is exercised.

There are many and various questions not a little embarrassing that present themselves to the student of history, when he quits the broad road of general facts, and wanders off in an attempt to penetrate somewhat further into the secrets of the past. The most careful balance of conflicting evidences gives as its result probability, not cer-



tainty ; each new hypothesis that seemed at first to explain every thing is succeeded in its turn and supplanted by one more recent, more satisfactory, and not less short-lived, than its predecessor ; the varying testimonies of historians shew how little reliance can be placed implicitly upon any of them ; and so the veil of Isis is still unraised, the secret of the old world undiscovered.

But if the minuter details of these matters must remain unknown to us, if length of time and altered circumstances forbid us to think the thoughts of the men of past ages, to realize their creeds, or to recall even in fancy the scenes amid which they lived and acted, yet the page of history need not be all a blank. We have failed, it may be, in deciphering truly the smaller letters of the inscription,—we may yet succeed with that part of it which is engraved more deeply, and in bolder and clearer characters.

It is indeed a strange sight that is presented by the great empires of the world, past and present, if we look at them from a point of view distant enough to allow individuals to group themselves into masses, and so, keeping in sight only the collective nations, trace out the part that each has played in history, the obstacles it has overcome, the type of civilization it has realized, the promises it has seemed to make, and how many of these it has kept or broken, and the permanent ideas which have remained to us as the lasting consequences of its existence. Nations come into being, and live and

pass away, but society is immortal ; and to us, "the heirs of all the ages," it cannot but be a matter of deepest concern to trace the causes that have brought society thus far onward ; to know what those conditions have been, of place or climate, under which the primary instincts and sympathies of mankind have expanded into their many various forms ; and to learn how the entire lives of nations have been shaped, beneath the influence of external circumstances, from the first period of their unconscious infancy. We shall see hostile tribes brought into collision, engaged in long and apparently doubtful conflict, and some one of them, at first undistinguishable among the rest, yet gaining ground steadily and surely ; uniting into itself the main characteristics of past and present civilization, or it may be the peculiar exponent of some one great idea which it bequeaths as a precious heirloom to posterity ; as Rome has been of unity, Athens of sensuous refinement and beauty, England of liberty : and yet in each of these cases it is hard to fix upon anything adequate to account for the effect noticed.

The great apostle of centralization, Napoleon Buonaparte, is reported to have said that, were he to found a city that was to rule the world, he could desire no other site for it than that of Rome. And, in truth, the position of Rome does seem in no little degree to have favoured her rise to greatness. Connected with the sea by a navigable river, yet not so close as to lie exposed to the sudden

attacks of pirates, or the *coup-de-main* of an enemy's fleet, she combined the advantages of an inland with those of a maritime position. Situated upon high and healthy ground, though surrounded on all sides by low and pestilential districts, her lofty site secured her citadel from storm, and the unhealthiness of the country around her was her safeguard against protracted blockade. But when these and other advantages of the kind have been enumerated, still nothing has been said that explains sufficiently the great facts in the history of Rome; why it was that she, and she alone, of the nations of antiquity, still pressing on in her career of conquest, gathered beneath her sway men of every nation, and creed, and language, until the limits of the known world had become co-extensive with those of the Roman empire.

Again, we can easily conceive that the delicious climate, and soft air, and lovely scenery of Greece might well have inspired, in those who lived amid such influences, that Pantheistic nature-worship, and intense appreciation of the present, and refined elegance of life and thought, which robbed even vice and immorality of all their grossness, and put them forward for imitation, stamped with the sanctions and examples of religion.

Yet side by side with Attica we find, in rude contrast, Sparta and Bœotia, steadily repelling from them the enchantments of nature, deaf to the siren-music of the elements, and to the last unwilling, or unable, to rival the civilization of Athens. The

circumstances of the early life of Rome, which trained her sons in constancy, and led them on to conquest, have existed elsewhere, and have been followed by different results and different national characteristics: the insular position of England has not been so peculiarly her own, that others have not enjoyed, apparently, all her advantages.

And while, in some instances, opportunities for good have been suffered to pass unheeded, in others circumstances appear to have lost their power to harm. Energy and courage, liberty and unity, have grown and borne fruit under every variety of climate and position. The Anglo-Saxon spirit of vigour and enterprise has not been lulled to repose beneath the soft airs and burning suns of the Tropics, nor quelled and cowed before the gigantic features of Oriental nature; *Cælum non animum mutat*,—whether in the plains of the Ganges or the valley of the mighty Mississippi. And so we find ourselves driven back at all points upon the differences and essential characteristics of race, marked as clearly and permanently in nations as the varieties of character are in individuals; and in these we are compelled to seek the origin of those national and generic qualities, of which climate and country alone have failed to give a satisfactory explanation. But we find that even these can be changed and modified under altered external relations, and that identity of race is not always accompanied by identity of character. On the contrary, we find the most marked differences, the most opposite characteristics,

among nations which are members of the same great family ; nay, even among sections of the same tribe, which have been separated from each other by choice or circumstance.

The Samnites of the mountains, when they descended upon their brethren who had settled themselves in the sunny regions of Campania, could scarcely have recognised those degenerate lowlanders as the offspring of their own warlike parents. A few generations had succeeded each other ; a few years had passed pleasantly away in the ease and enjoyments of the south ; but these had been sufficient to obliterate all traces of their ancient spirit, and they fell an easy prey before those rugged mountaineers who had been cradled in difficulties which they never had experienced, and had continued to practise traditional virtues which they had long ago forgotten.

But if so short an interval of time has been found long enough to bring about so marked a distinction between those members of the same nation that have been subjected to different external influences, it would seem that there can be no differences too great to be accounted for by the operation of similar causes, if only they are sufficiently varied in their nature, and a sufficient length of time allowed for their action. An inland or maritime position, the presence or absence of navigable rivers, and of the means of communication with foreign countries, the fitness of the soil for pasture or agriculture—out of these apparently accidental circumstances seem often

to arise the entire differences between highly-cultivated and savage nations,—between civilized races and barbarians.

In speaking, then, of the difference between the various races of mankind, nothing more should be assumed or implied, than that there are early, and apparently permanent, characteristics which do actually distinguish the several portions of the human family; impressed at some time antecedent to history, and continuing for the most part more or less modified, until the latest period of their existence as nations;—such differences (to select an extreme instance) as those are which exist between the Negro and Caucasian races, and set a mark even upon their features and aspect which can be traced from the unknown date of the earliest Egyptian paintings.

It shall be our next aim to determine as far as possible the chief physical causes by which such differences are originated, and to examine somewhat in detail the kind of influence which they exercise upon the several constituent parts of a nation's character; taking due care to attribute no force to circumstances over nations which they might not be presumed to exercise over individuals, fairly, and in accordance with those general laws which determine the varieties of human character,—as far, at least, as the operations of unbroken laws can be detected at all in a subject so complex and difficult.

But before proceeding any further with the enquiry, it would be well to explain somewhat pre-



cisely the meaning which we intend to convey in speaking of the moral condition of any given country. Among the chief marks by which we should judge of it would be the degree of its mental culture, and of the diffusion of such culture generally throughout the community; the virtues or vices which might be said to form part of the national character, such as courage, perseverance, temperance, and their opposites; the state of industry and of wealth, as far as it was not directly dependent upon mere physical advantages; the religion of the nation, and the other beliefs commonly entertained upon social and political subjects; their most important laws and customs, and the general constitution and aim of their government; their habitual occupations and tastes, and particularly the character of their literature and of their æsthetical cultivation; and upon all of these we shall find that external circumstances exercise a great and preponderating influence, though one varying both in degree and in kind, in accordance with the more or less advanced condition of society.

It is a remark of Aristotle's, that democratic institutions flourish best in a country perfectly level; but if there be a single tall rock or hill rising from the plain, and forming as it were a natural citadel, that the probable consequence will be the establishment of a tyranny or monarchy; while in a country generally level, but interspersed with numerous unconnected eminences, the government will probably be in the hands of an aristocracy. He observes,

too, that proximity to the sea is very favourable to democracy, since in the establishment of a marine the greater part of the sailors would probably be taken from the lower classes of the people, who would thus acquire consideration from the importance of their services to the state. We should not be likely to attach the same kind of importance to these influences: the notice of them serves rather to shew the immense difference between political speculation then and now,—between theories that apply to small Greek commonwealths and to nations as large as those of modern Europe.

But the sea is, and ever has been, the parent of freedom; though not in the same way, or through the same causes, that Aristotle has pointed out; rather through the ideas which its sight inspires,—the vague, unsatisfied longings which its vastness suggests; conscious as it were of freedom and might in itself, unrestrained by man's fetters, owing no obedience to man's arbitrary will: and so with the raving of its winds, and the music of its mighty waters, it kindles the thoughts of those who are conscious of its presence, in fullest adoration to the spirit of divine liberty.

Solitude and retirement seem essential to depth of thought and character; and those thoughts which the grander features of Nature suggest to the solitary, are not only good for the individual, but society in general could ill spare their loss. We have, indeed, reason to rejoice, proudly as we may hail the progress of man's empire, that there



are some spots still remaining on our planet, which man's hand has never made commonplace and productive. The mountain-peaks of the giant Himalaya chain, clothed with the snows of an eternal winter, ever remain untrodden by man's foot, undescrated by man's industry; the waters of the sea, ἀλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο, are barren now as of old, and, though forced for a time into man's service, never suffer him long to be unmindful that they are still his master, or, at least, have never abated one tittle of their equal freedom.

But the sea has other influences, too, more obvious, though not more real or more important, than those which it exercises indirectly through the feelings and inspirations to which it gives birth. Historians have attributed the decay of the Roman empire, in great part, to its neglect of commerce, —a neglect which allowed the evils of an unequal distribution of land to be felt in their full force, and to divide the population of imperial Italy into the two classes of millionaires and lazzaroni.

Adam Smith speaks very decidedly about the natural influence of the sea on the relations between distant countries; and, after enumerating several advantages which carriage by water possesses over carriage by land, goes on to affirm that many branches of trade are now existing, and many channels of intercourse open, which could never have been possible, were it not for the facilities of communication which the sea has afforded.

“Trade is essentially democratic,”—partly by the

influence which it gives to wealth over nobility, and to personal over real property ; partly by the spirit of enterprise and daring which it engenders in those engaged in it,—a spirit little compatible with any but free institutions ; partly by the more constant interchange of thought which it effects between distant peoples, and the restlessness which it thus engenders in those who stand, as it were, ever in the presence of many types of civilization differing from their own, urging them to copy all that is worthy of imitation in others, and not to stand apart from them in the isolation of pride or listlessness. A country shut in by mountains, as Arcadia was, or one that, like Switzerland, has little intercourse with the great outer world, may live on from one generation to another, still holding the same quiet fancies, still undisturbed in its seclusion by the many forms of life and thought that are elsewhere springing up into being, and shadowing out a more perfect future. It may long enjoy the calm and innocence of its childhood, lengthened out while the great war of ideas is raging around it in all its fury, and other nations, standing in the van of civilization, are completing their appointed work amidst the conflict of opposing systems, and in the presence, it may be, of bloodshed and battle.

There is much that is very lovely and very enviable in a repose such as this ; but it is not the highest form of a nation's existence ; and those could never desire to return to it who have once had experience of the higher life, any more than

the full-grown man, though wearied already and careworn in the battle of life, would exchange with deliberate preference his own lot of toil and sorrow for the quiet enjoyments of that happy season while he yet spake, and thought, and understood as a child, and had never tasted in his own person of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

It has been well remarked by M. Cousin, that the scale of the natural features of each country determines in a great measure the character of its inhabitants. In those cases in which the notion of *l'infini*—of boundless extent, vast and oppressive—is suggested by the habitual aspect of the surrounding scenery, man becomes as it were the slave of nature, is cowed down and awe-struck into submission in the presence of forces too mighty for him to cope with, of extension too vast for him to comprehend. The active powers become enfeebled or remain undeveloped, and a vague, unsettled habit of mind, combined with an enervated frame, unfits him for the battle of life, and he degenerates into a dreamy theorizer, subtle, it may be, but impractical and unimaginative in the bolder and more manly sense of the term. Such is the character of the Hindu—a character impressed upon him as early as the time of Aristotle, who remarks of the Asiatic races, that they are *διανοητικά μὲν καὶ τεχνικά τὴν φύσιν, ἄθυμα δέ*.

But when *le fini* is the predominating idea, the moral and intellectual results are then very dif-

ferent. Small rivers and hills, plains of limited extent, and a country generally undistinguished by any features larger than these, are little likely to exercise a depressing influence, and strike an undefined awe into the imagination of the beholder. Nature becomes the servant, and not the master, of man ; he frees himself more readily from his early superstitions and terrors of the external world, and goes on to subdue into obedience to his own will the material forces of the universe.

But he fails in breadth of thought and purpose ; his desires are contracted, his development limited : there are many of the nobler attributes of man which he does not and cannot possess.

Such, M. Cousin would have us believe, has been the fate of Englishmen ; while, with a vanity pardonable in any but a philosopher, he insinuates that in France, and France only, the two types are perfectly combined ; the size of the country itself, and its general aspect, suggesting thoughts neither too wide nor too contracted.

We may not be ready to acquiesce in the justice of these examples, but the main statements seem quite incontrovertible ; and derive perhaps additional force from the consideration that the Celtic and Teutonic races are descended primarily from the same stock as the Hindus. All are members of the great Caucasian family of nations, in spite of the many diversities which mark off their present conditions.

Little is known of the early history of India : its

soil was so remarkably fertile, and presented altogether such peculiar advantages to the cultivator, that it was one of the first countries in which, as in ancient Egypt, man's labour produced more than the amount of wealth necessary for his subsistence. Leisure was thus allowed for attention to something beyond the bare requirements of the body, and civilization became possible; while, at the same time, some system of fixed law became necessary to regulate the distribution of the earth's superfluous produce.

The character of Indian civilization seems to have been determined in a great measure by the nature of the country. It was at some undefined period of remote antiquity, prior to the composition of the great Hindu epic poems, that a protracted struggle took place between the Brahmans, or priestly caste, and the Kshatriyas, or warrior caste, and ended in the defeat of the latter. Of the nature of the contest we know but little; only a few incidental records or allusions are to be found in Hindu literature; but the results of it are visible at the present moment.

The physical influences of the country favoured the development of speculative rather than of practical thought; and a character has been thus impressed upon Indian civilization which it still retains, to all appearance indelible. We cannot but remember the results in Europe of a contest somewhat similar between the temporal and spiritual powers,—terminated, however, in a manner very

different ; but when we contrast the present status of European and Asiatic nations, we ought to bear in mind, that, granted their common origin, there is nothing to account for their differences, except the different nature of the countries in which they have established themselves, the different ideas impressed upon them by the aspect of surrounding objects, and the different habits which they have acquired under the varied circumstances of their early national life.

The same remarks will apply in great measure to many of the systems of religion which have existed, and exist still around us. These would appear to be partly a reflection of the life and manners of their votaries, varying in accordance with their various habits and institutions ; “ for as men liken the forms of the gods to their own forms, so do they also liken the manner of their lives ;” and partly to be, in many cases, remnants of the traditions of a ruder age, which invested Nature and natural objects with a personal life and will ; seeing, as it were, its own reflected image in the trees, and mountains, and rocks which surrounded it ; and tracing in the howling of the tempest, and the wild wrath of the ocean, evidences of passions similar to its own.

The existence of this personifying tendency is a matter of fact and observation. Its effects are perhaps best exemplified by the old Scandinavian legends, formed in striking accordance with the country and people that gave birth to them. Strange



tales of dwarfs and giants, monsters superhuman in their size and strength, but resembling man in the kind of nature attributed to them,—uncouth forms half divine, half human, some friends to man, some his awful enemies,—to us ludicrous, perhaps, from their grotesqueness, but to them a matter of real belief and dread; passing lives like those of the ancient heroes, in wild adventures or deadly conflict, succeeded by nights of feasting in the spacious halls of Walhalla; and, beyond all this, an evil day to be expected at some time in the distant future, when the spirit of evil should triumph over that of life and order; when the heavens and earth should be resolved into their primal chaos, and man and the divine powers that had guarded him, should be destroyed in the universal ruin;—all these stories seem to point to some northern land as the place of their origin; a land of storms and tempests,—dark, and gloomy, and terrible,—in which Nature yielded to man grudgingly, as it were, and uncertainly, the bare means of subsistence, and offered little that could awaken his trust and love.

There are other circumstances connected with the physical conditions of different countries, which influence the religions of their inhabitants in a manner not less perceptible or less worthy of notice. It is a remark of Lyell's, that in those portions of the earth's surface which are subject to the action of volcanic forces, and are devastated by perpetual earthquakes, "although sentiments of pure religion are frequently awakened by these awful visitations,

yet we more commonly find that an habitual state of fear, a sense of helplessness, and a belief in the futility of all human exertions, prepare the minds of the vulgar for the influence of a demoralizing superstition<sup>a</sup>.”

And he goes on to observe that, in such a state of things, property is quite insecure under the best government; for even were a man to contrive to save some of his possessions from the general ruin, he may yet be plundered with impunity under cover of the universal confusion and consternation of such a season; while the destruction of national wealth, and of the improvements which have been effected by human labour in the development of natural resources, retards the progress of civilization, and tends to throw society back towards an ever-threatened state of barbarism.

There are many causes which everywhere affect the state of the fine arts. Their growth has been connected in early ages more or less closely with religion. There exists in both the same tendency to personify the powers of Nature, and while the desire to pay homage to the gods has been the greatest stimulus to excite the artist's genius, so too their birth, and parentage, and history have afforded the fittest material on which it could exercise itself.

“Theocritus,” said Coleridge, “is the only instance of a genuine poet who has lived under a

<sup>a</sup> Principles of Geology, c. 28.



tyranny." But Coleridge was unfavourable, perhaps unjust, to Virgil. Certain it is, however, that those times which have been most fruitful in great poets, have been times of excitement, generally of foreign war, when the hopes and fears of a nation are strongest, its passions most roused, and the routine of its ordinary life most signally broken through. Dante was an exile from Florence when he wrote the "*Divina Commedia*," driven out in the long contest of the Guelphs and Ghibellines. It was in the days of Shakspeare and Spenser that the Armada sailed for London, just after the discovery of America had opened a new world to European enterprise. *Æschylus* lived and wrote in the time of the Persian war; *Sophocles*, of the Athenian empire and the war with Sparta.

But these are causes transient and occasional. The physical conditions of countries are unvarying, and exercise a constant influence over Art, through the mode of life which they necessitate, not less than by the ideas which they suggest. The shepherds of Arabia, a wandering race, separated off, among themselves, by the early distinctions of tribe and family, have never produced a single epic or dramatic poem. Their feeling of nationality would seem to have been too weak for the former, their manner of life too monotonous for the latter; and they have accordingly left all but lyric verse to be cultivated by races more settled and united, who have, too, been better conversant with the innumerable forms of life and character which spring

up, in all their diversity, with the growth of a civilized people.

It is seldom that countries whose natural features are the sublimest or the most lovely, affect their own inhabitants as they do strangers, who are but a short time among them. Mendelssohn has expressed in some of his most exquisite music the thoughts which he gained in his visit to the Scotch Highlands. It is to the crystal mirror of Lake Lemman, and to the Alps, with their grandeur of ridges and ravines, and pinnacles frosted with snows, that have outlasted a thousand summers, that some of the noblest poetry of Byron and Coleridge has been dedicated, and has owed its origin; but neither Scotland nor Switzerland has been renowned above other countries as the birthplace of musicians or poets.

The great landscape-painters of England and Holland hold confessedly the first rank of any in their own branch of art; not that the sky which they lived under, or the scenery amid which they wrought, has been peculiarly grand or beautiful. The variations of our northern climate, and changeful weather, afford a better study to the artist than an eternity of sunshine and summer.

We will now examine the influence of physical conditions upon architecture, and take as examples to guide us in our enquiry, and without any attempt to make the catalogue an exhaustive one, the Oriental, Greek, and Gothic types. We shall find that each of them, alike in its faults and its excel-

lencies, bears impress of the nation and country that gave birth to it. It will be unnecessary to recapitulate, in each of these instances, the circumstances that seem to have determined, in some measure, the character of their authors ; it will be sufficient if we can here succeed in tracing the same resemblance between art and character, which we have already attempted to establish between character and position.

The architecture of the East has one peculiar deficiency. It bears no stamp of the workman's individual thought—no sign that it was to him an object of any interest. “The men who did the work hated it,” or, at best, did it monotonously, as slaves would, as a set portion of their daily task. This is a characteristic which attaches itself to the buildings of Karnak and Luxor, not less than to those of India, and tells us more of the condition of society than could have been told by written records. We know that all for which we most prize modern civilization—the free growth of man's spiritual nature, the license given to the development of individual character—could not there have existed ; that the workman had sunk to be the mere tool to carry out the plans of another, forbidden, by the nature of his work, to think at all for himself, or to contribute to the execution of it any impress of his own spirit.

Very different was the architecture of Greece ; it has been termed the perfection of sensuous beauty, the work of men satisfied with what they did and

what they were, and seemingly unconscious of the possibility of a higher life. There is no sign in it of any striving after an ideal excellence, too lofty to be reached, but giving life and grandeur to every attempt earnestly made to reach it. In a word, no sign is to be found of the influence which Christianity has exercised in ennobling and spiritualizing the architecture of mediæval Europe.

This was the work of men less happy than the Greeks; less satisfied with themselves, less contented with their own deficiencies. They felt that here man had no sure resting-place, that the heavens and the earth were not to abide for ever, but that the old order of the universe was destined to be changed and to pass away. This they had been taught in the early legends of their mythology, but they had added to it now another and a higher faith,—a faith in God, to which they had before been strangers,—a confidence in His care, though all else might fail them. And so they looked on life with other eyes, more far-seeing, and more skilled to discern between good and evil, and felt the more deeply that the utmost joys which a lower life might promise could not and ought not to employ the energies of an immortal spirit.

And their work was noble because they saw its faults, and yet refused to obtain perfection by adopting a less lofty standard; and because they did it without a thought of self, careless of their own glory, of all save His to Whom their work was consecrated.

And they were strong-handed and strong-hearted men, no *dillettanti* admirers of what they were too effeminate themselves to conceive and execute—men who had a thorough love for nature, for the storm as well as for the sunshine, for the tender flower as well as the stately forest ; for they saw around them everywhere the footprints of divinity, and listened to a voice through the roaring of the winter wind and the tender breath of the soft summer air, heard alike in the songs of birds and in the music of the silent night,—a voice that speaks, but not in any language of man, that tells a tale, wild, and fitful, and uncertain, yet full of meaning, fraught with some strange charm too subtle and too beautiful for analysis, one to be known and felt rather than to be understood.

But the opposite view of the subject still remains for our consideration. We have traced in some measure the influence of physical agencies in forming character and exciting and directing industry, but we must not forget that this influence is reciprocal ; the power which man possesses to change and modify the physical conditions of the countries which he inhabits is scarcely less than that which they exercise over him, and is a more obvious one, and traced more easily in its direct consequences.

We should be likely to suppose, apart from direct evidence, that the changes which men could effect would be considerable. We know with what limited means, and in how uniform a manner, the beaver

and the coral insect perform their work : the one damming up the course of rivers, and so forcing them to seek an outlet by overflowing the adjoining country ; the other building up the foundation for little reefs and islands in the centre of the ocean, very slowly and by the industry of centuries ; and yet we see what vast effects follow from their little labours. The surface of entire districts is changed, swamps and marshes take the place of dry land, and the whole character of the vegetation is altered accordingly ; while, by the work of the coral insect, dry land takes the place of ocean, the very boundaries of the habitable world are extended, and vegetation flourishes, and men fix their abodes, where formerly was to be seen nothing but a wide waste of sea. We might surely anticipate that if such vast effects resulted from the labours of creatures so small and insignificant, the influence of man must indeed be very considerable, working as he does with means so infinitely greater, and exerting them in methods so many and various.

Nor would the facts of the case belie our expectations ; for although no perceptible alterations seem to be effected by the agency of nomad races, which subsist upon the produce of the chase, or the flocks and herds which they drive about for pasture, or gain their livelihood by appropriating the unsolicited gifts of nature, without in any way contributing to their production ; yet when, owing to the pressure of population, and the consequent failure of their ordinary means of living, they are



compelled to exchange the nomad for the agricultural life, and civilization, in some degree, succeeds to barbarism, the process of cultivation and the necessary improvements preliminary to it do then effect a very great and permanent change in the physical conditions of the locality in which they happen. Forests are cleared away, canals are cut and roads made to facilitate internal traffic ; marshes are drained, and the channels of rivers freed from any impediments that may have obstructed them ; and these are improvements which do not end in themselves, but produce further changes, in the contrivance of which man has had no share. The extreme severities of the hot and cold seasons are checked and moderated, and a somewhat equable temperature established through the entire year ; the quantity of rain that falls is diminished, the humidity of the atmosphere lessened, and the country made in every way fitter to be cultivated and inhabited by man. We have records of the changes which have occurred in France, and in our own country, through the operation of these causes, and we know that the same process is still going on in the states of North America, of which many have been brought under cultivation almost in our own life-time, and afford perhaps the best instance of the enormous results which follow human industry.

Swamps covered with gigantic cypress-trees and aquatic oaks, and here and there a few dwarf palm-trees, wide prairie-lands, traversed only by the

Indian and the buffalo, untilled, and almost uninhabited, stretching far away to the boundless west ; and far to the south all the fantastic luxuriance of a tropical flora, where the air was heavy with the scent of flowers, and the eye dazzled with the gorgeousness of their varied colours ; and overhead the magnolia and tulip-tree, and the giant ceiba-tree, too lofty to be judged in all its vast proportions by eyes accustomed only to the vegetation of Europe,—such was the produce and such the aspect of the new world far in the unknown west, before the first English settlements had been planted in Virginia, or the pilgrim crew of the “ Mayflower ” had landed by the rocky bay of Massachusetts.

But now civilized man has fixed his habitation in the haunts of savages, the material resources of the country are appreciated and improved, and the glory and freshness of it has passed away like a dream, before the industry and enterprise of Anglo-Saxon settlers. The vast prairies are ploughed up, and brought under cultivation, the swamps drained, the rivers navigated, the forests cut down and cleared away. The old gods are indeed driven out from their abodes, their haunted shades profaned, their retreats desecrated ; and man has taken one more giant step to empire over the world of matter.

But it has been by Nature’s aid that he has triumphed here ; there are places where he has triumphed in spite of her opposition, and won his way to greatness ; and of this the position and



circumstances of Holland have afforded a remarkable illustration. Were it not for artificial defences,—for dykes and embankments, kept up at an enormous cost and labour,—a great part of Holland would have been engulfed by the ocean which has long threatened it, and the billows would toss and whiten over her wealthy cities, and rich pastures, and pleasant country-houses; and a land would be lost to Europe, to which Europe owes no common debt of gratitude.

For it was beneath the cloudy sky and inclement air of Holland that those theories were originated, and carried out in action, which more perhaps than any others have directed the course of modern European politics. The law of nations was there improved and developed, and the great truth enun-  
 tiated and acted out, that government exists only for the benefit of the governed; that the position of magistrate, or king, or emperor, can give no excuse for oppression, no right to the indulgence of a selfish policy; that power is held in trust for the good of those over whom it is to be exercised, and that apart from their good the magistrate can have no rights, the king no prerogative.

Such was the freedom of spirit which those had inherited, whose fathers had won by the toil of their hands, not only their subsistence, but their very country, and had battled long for her independence against Romish plots and Spanish armies; such were the thoughts that grew and bore their first-fruits in the bleak and bitter north, where man had

learned self-restraint and self-reliance by hardships and successful toil.

To the south and south-west of Holland we find another and a different example of the results of human labour. In many parts of Flanders agriculture has been made possible only by means of soil artificially accumulated. The country is thickly peopled, and the facilities great for internal commerce, and high farming consequently profitable; but it seldom happens that it is carried on as elaborately as here. We are contented if we can make our ground bring forth its fruits in greater abundance and more frequently, and can cultivate the land which we find already in existence; we do not attempt to add to its amount, or adopt a method of culture for which it is naturally quite unfitted.

Further to the south we find, in the vineyards of Germany, another instance similar to the one which has just been mentioned. Many of these are planted upon high cliffs in the neighbourhood of the Rhine, upon a surface of bare rock thinly covered by soil which has been carried thither and prepared industriously for cultivation.

Such, then, and so great is the influence which man, even when least favoured by the accidents of position or climate, can exercise in modifying external circumstances, and bending them into accordance with his own purpose, if only he will struggle on with a steady aim and a stout heart, undaunted and unwearied, whatever difficulties may oppose him, and only cease from his toil when he

has compelled a blessing from his reluctant adversary.

But before a people can be trained in habits of industry and care, each man must feel a reasonable assurance that he will himself reap the fair fruits of his labour. In the degree in which this is doubtful, so is the unlikelihood great that that aversion to severe toil will be overcome, which is, so to say, a leading instinct in the lives of savages.

It is this which makes slave-labour so proverbially inefficient, and furnishes the most plausible arguments in favour of the French system of *petit* culture over that of large farms cultivated by hired labourers.

The valley of the Jordan is naturally one of the most fruitful spots of earth; but owing to the unsettled condition of the country, and the insecure tenure of property, it is allowed at present to remain almost untilled. It is the opinion of recent travellers, that if the Turkish government were to establish a line of forts to protect the inhabitants against the marauding incursions of the Arabs, the effect of the stimulus so given to industry would be, that a country now unvalued and neglected would soon become unequalled in its productiveness, and completely realize the most splendid Scriptural accounts of the Jewish land of promise.

A low state of civilization is in every way an obstacle even to physical progress; where there exists in a people little power of combined action, and little thought for the future, the choicest gifts

of Nature will lie neglected within their grasp, the fairest opportunities of improvement be suffered to pass unheeded.

An instance of this, very curious and well deserving notice, is found in the story of an attempt made by the Jesuits to civilize the inhabitants of Paraguay. They acquired their entire confidence, established peace among them, and instructed them in European arts and agriculture, thus effecting a complete change in their habits and modes of life, and even overcoming, by the force of their personal influence, the natural aversion which the savages felt to labour ; and yet, when all this had been done, they found that their object was as far as ever from them. The real obstacle to the improvement of the Indians consisted in their improvidence,—a fault of character which remained uneradicated. They reserved no grain for the next seed-time, they left their draught oxen unyoked all night, and even killed them for food ; thinking, if blamed for it, that the plea of hunger was a sufficient excuse. So great, indeed, was their inability to think or take precautions for the future, that, had it not been for the constant care and superintendence of the missionaries, they must soon have been reduced to a state of utter want.

The desolating famines which occur, from time to time, in the different provinces of India, have been attributed to a similar cause. The harvests there are usually large, but of course to some extent uncertain ; and if the year ever fails to produce its

accustomed supply of food, the deficiency falls upon a people who have never possessed foresight to guard against a distant and uncertain evil, nor self-restraint to stint themselves at the commencement of the season, that they may not starve before its close.

The same defect of character exists, though in less degree, among the Chinese, and there shews itself in the temporary nature of the improvements they make, and in their carelessness about a distant future. "European travellers," says Raeb,<sup>a</sup> "are surprised at meeting their little floating farms by the side of swamps which only require draining to render them tillable. It seems to them strange that labour should not rather be bestowed on the solid earth, where its fruits might endure, than on structures which must decay and perish within a few years. The people they are among think not so much of future years, as of the present time."

The question has been started<sup>c</sup>, whether man's influence tends to increase or diminish the irregularities of the earth's surface. The decision made by scientific men is in favour of the latter alternative. It seldom happens that heavy substances are conveyed by man, in any large quantities, from a lower to a higher station. The stones and timber which furnish him with materials for every kind of building are generally employed on lower ground than that from which they were carried; and by the opera-

<sup>b</sup> Quoted by Mill, *Pol. Econ.*, bk. i. c. 11.

<sup>c</sup> Lyell, *Princ. of Geol.*, c. 44.

tions of agriculture, ploughing and breaking up the soil, and so exposing it, he increases in some measure the natural effect of rain to wash away and carry downwards a large amount of earthy matter.

We have thus traced some of the chief influences of the external world over man ; we have seen that physical conditions fix in a great measure his pursuits and character ; and have attempted to determine the nature of their influence and some of its leading laws.

Nor has man himself appeared as the mere passive recipient of thoughts and feelings impressed upon him from without. He has not failed to react upon the causes that have affected him, and mould them into conformity with the conditions of his own development.

It is a common error to assign too much or too little importance to this material progress. It is not everything ; God forbid we should think it so : man has a higher work to do when all that relates to this world is done and finished. But it is valuable in itself ; everything is, that contributes in any way to man's pleasures or convenience ; and it is valuable as a proof of what has led to it, —of the habits of mind which it implies, industry, attention, self-denial, and often self-sacrifice ; and it is valuable in its results, as the basis of mental culture and moral influence. The wants of the body must be satisfied, before we become conscious that the mind has any wants. Art and Philosophy fol-



low, they do not precede, material advancement :  
*ὅθεν ἤδη πάντων τῶν τοιούτων κατεσκευασμένων,  
 αἱ μὴ πρὸς ἡδονήν, μηδὲ πρὸς τἀναγκαῖα τῶν  
 ἐπιστημῶν εὐρέθησαν, καὶ πρῶτον τούτοις τοῖς  
 τόποις οὐπὲρ ἐσχόλασαν*<sup>d</sup>.

And when we bear this in mind we shall look with a new interest upon the results of our industrial and commercial activity, and learn to appreciate them rather as the necessary and almost certain antecedents of a wider diffusion of art and civilization, than only as a boundless accession to our national wealth and power.

<sup>d</sup> Arist. Metaph., bk. i. c. 1.











